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FOR EUR/UBI, EUR/PAO, INR/R

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC, KMDR, BE

SUBJECT: BRUSSELS MEDIA REACTION Iraq USA

I. (iraq) Iraq

1 "The Iraqis' Dangerous Sectarian Vote"

Baudouin Loos in left-of-center Le Soir (12/22) (circ. 100,200) opines: "Shiites voted for Shiites. Sunnis voted for Sunnis. Kurds voted for Kurds. But who voted for Iraq?"

"Will the December 15 legislative elections turn into confusion and increase the current political chaos? Some observers fear this, even predicting a split of the country.

"The partial results that have been released clearly confirm that Iraqis voted in favor of their community. Kurds, who represent 20 percent of the population, voted for the Kurdish list, Shiites - 60 percent of the population - for the main conservative Shiite list, and Sunnis - 20 percent - for the main Sunni list, which is also IsQic.

"While the victory of the community's lists was predictable, the results in Baghdad and Kirkuk were not. And after counting 89 percent of the votes, the Shiite list got 58 percent in Baghdad, while the Sunni list only got 18.6 percent and the mixed and secular list of the Shiite Iyad Allawi 13.5 percent. In Kirkuk, the Kurdish list got 51 percent of the votes. Final results will not

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be known until early 2006, after all complaints have been looked into.

"Sunnis are very upset, and so is Allawi, a close ally of the Americans. They keep on complaining about alleged frauds. Meanwhile, Americans and Brits are pondering over the first lessons of the ballot, lessons that are bitter for them. The number of votes of the only 'mixed' list - that of Allawi - is pathetic or even humiliating, with a maximum of 13 or 14 percent in a few provinces. Disappointed, the very influential U.S. Ambassador in Baghdad Zalman Khalkilzad stated: 'it is as if people preferred to vote for their ethnic or sectarian identity. But if Iraq wants to succeed, there will need to be cooperation between communities.'

"While the Kurds confirmed their ambition to become independent, the hope to see Iraqis vote in favor of a pro-Western secular democracy has vanished with these elections. Analyzing the success of the religious Shiite and Sunni lists, an Iraqi commentator was quoted as saying in yesterday's British The Independent: 'in two years and a half, Bush has managed to create two Taliban zones in Iraq.'

"This is especially annoying for the United States since the Shiites are maintaining excellent relations with their coreligionists who are in power in Iran. George Bush was perhaps too fast when he concluded that the Iraqi elections represented the success of U.S. policy in Iraq."

2. "Divided Iraq"

Frank Schlomer in independent De Morgen (12/22) (circ. 51,500) comments : "Religious fundamentalists now have the upper hand in Iraq, and the secular and nationalist candidates who were supported by the United States and the international coalition have suffered an humiliating defeat. Shiite hardliners have now Baghdad and the entire South of the country in their hands. Parties that publicly support armed resistance against the foreign occupants are going to have a large majority in Sunni provinces. The Kurds have already almost obtained the independence of their region and that was also reflected in the results.

"If the final results confirm the above, that will mean no less than the total failure of the U.S.-British plans to turn a united Iraq into a pro-Western secular

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democracy. Islamic fundamentalists have now become powerful in Iraq through elections, just like happened with the Taliban in Afghanistan.

"Elections in Iraq are far from what George Bush said they were in one of his speeches, i.e. a success of U.S. policy in Iraq. Actually, they are an overwhelming victory for the enemies of the United States, within and outside of Iraq. No doubt that the regime in Iran will be happy that Iraqi religious parties, which can rely on Tehran's support, have become the strongest political force in Iraq - to begin with intolerant Iranian President Ahmadinejad, of course."

II (usa) Bush Administration

"Democracy, According to Bush"

New York correspondent Elodie Perrodil in the political column of financial L'Echo (12/22) (circ. 17,500) comments: "The American neo-conservative Administration has never concealed that its objective was to spread its concepts of justice and freedom throughout the world. Ironically, at the moment when the U.S. President is praising democratic progress in Iraq, he is being unmasked as a result of revelations, of which there is a long lists: arbitrary detentions, torture, wiretapping, untrue propaganda. This is more the portrait of a fallen dictator than of a beacon of democracy."

"The New York Times' revelations on wiretapping came after recent Washington Post's revelations on secret CIA prisons, and after a Los Angeles Times article on secret payments by the Pentagon to have 'positive' articles published in Iraqi media."

"With such a list of revelations, U.S. democracy is looking a sorry sight."

III. Media reaction report prepared by Pierre Manderlier (French and Dutch). Tel: 32-2-508-2412.

Imbrie

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